Introduction to the Minitrack on Culture, Identity & Inclusion in Digital and Social Media

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Abstract

Technology facilitated social media present opportunities for new frontiers of research as they interact with cultures, identities, and diversity. Digital inequalities continue to be present. Recognizing the kaleidoscope and intersectionality of culture, gender and identity, this minitrack presents innovative research across a wide range of methods and subjects. Exploring how social media technologies become interconnected with and embedded in existing socio-cultural contexts is essential to assess how these platforms affect key power dynamics in society. The work in this minitrack sets the scene for understanding better how digital and social media can foster (or serve as hindering factors for) diversity and inclusion in multiple settings in a world that is increasingly local and global at the same time. In sum, this minitrack highlights papers from a range of disciplines and methodologies that focus on the three I's of internet, identity, and inclusion as they intersect with transformational social media and, indeed, impact human lives.

1. Introduction

One of the understudied and vital aspects of Digital and Social Media today is its relation to culture(s), identity(ies), access, and inclusion. As digital technologies continue to emerge, the interrelationships among such technologies and identities at the individual, group, and additional levels as well as cultures must be examined. There is the nuanced potential for both inclusion and exclusion.

2. Minitrack Topics and Themes

The papers presented here serve as exemplars of this cutting-edge research community and reflect a range of methodologies. These works incorporate and highlight the voices of groups and individuals whose lives have been profoundly impacted by technology but are seldom heard in research. Potential topics for this minitrack included:

- Inter-cultural and Cross-cultural use of Social Media
- Crowdsourcing Processes and Inclusion Issues
- Designing Social Media for Inclusion
- Social media, identity and collective action
- Gendered Social Media
- The construction and circulation of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion and disability through the use of social media
- Online Harassment
- Identity Enactment, Adoption, and Policing
- Reproduction of biases
- Governance and Rules in Action
- Aging and Social Media
- Inter-generational use of Social Media
- Impact and influence of social media on diversity
- Social Media, MOOCS, & Inclusion
- Social Media & Implicit Bias
- Social Media, Culture & Change/Social Innovation
- Social Media & Intersectionality
- Social media, Access and E-Learning
- Social media, accessibility and digital disability
- Social Media, Disruptive Innovation, and Capacity-Building For All

3. Sessions & Papers At A Glance

As co-chairs of the HICSS minitrack on Culture, Identity and Inclusion, which is part of the Track on

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Digital and Social Media, we are delighted to share this year's papers with you. The following four papers highlight various and key dimensions of this dynamic research community.

"White Twitter: Tracing the evolution of the alt-right in retweets, 2009-2016" presents a techno-social examination of retweets by the White Nationalist Movement over an eight-year period. Using mixed methods, the study illustrates how such retweets were smaller in number until the Donald Trump campaign for the U.S. Presidency. Moving to Germany and the European Union, "Age- and Gender-dependent Differences of Asylum Seekers' Information Behavior and Online Media Usage" highlights social media usage by asylum seekers from the Middle East who are in Germany. Using mixed methods, this paper analyzes their social media usage with a focus on age and gender.

The paper on "Understanding the Influence of Cultural Dimensions on the Interpretative Ability of People to Infer Personality from the Avatars: Evidence from Cultural Dimensions of Greece, Pakistan, Russia, and Singapore" provides a cross-national comparison of avatar interpretation and its relation to cultural dimensions. Finally, "Digitization - Frankenstein's New Media Demon in Bulgaria?" focuses on the media environment in one country, Bulgaria, against the backdrop of global ICT challenges and European Union standards. Using mixed methods including surveys, this paper analyzes the Bulgarian complex national media ecosystem and its development.

These papers, taken together, set the scene for crafting a new research agenda for this mini-track. The Co-chairs encourage vibrant discussion and, indeed, co-creation of our community's research opportunities ahead. This is a particularly compelling time, especially with emerging ICT technologies and possible interactions with social media related to culture, identity and inclusion.

4. Towards a Research Community on Digital Identity and Social Inclusion

This mini-track has tremendous potential to catalyze the creation of a robust, interdisciplinary research community within HICSS focused on the intersection of identity, culture, access, and inclusion. Given the growth in the use of digital and social media (and convergences with related technologies), there are many opportunities for continued expansion and for serving as a valuable resource for the broader HICSS community.

We need to remember (as do papers in this minitrack) the culture kaleidoscope (the myriad levels of culture from small group and occupational to organizational, interorganizational and national) as well as the intersectionality of culture, gender and identity. Similar to the culture kaleidoscope, there are also multiple and complex identities including cultural, age, generational, racial, ability, and gender identities. Most importantly, the intersections among social media and the culture and identity kaleidoscopes presage additional research agendas, as we examine social media usages and their outcomes in myriad contexts. The papers in this minitrack set the scene for understanding better how digital and social media can foster (or sometimes hinder) diversity and inclusion in multiple settings in a world that is increasingly more local and global at the same time.

Emerging technologies including blockchain, the Internet of Things, Robotics, or Artificial Intelligence present cutting edge opportunities for new social-media related research, as these technologies interact with cultures, identities, and diversity or inclusion over time. What shapes will these interactions take in the future; and what are the implications including the ethical of such trajectories for research and practice?

The overall future trajectory of our field itself is also open and provides plentiful research challenges. Continuation of technology-facilitated collaboration processes and the trends of multistakeholder participation in policy-making pose significant research questions for those studying identity, inclusion and social media. Do social media foster in formation flow in multistakeholder setttings? Who has access? Real access remains an issue. As noted earlier, developments in media-related technologies as well as the interstices among internet, social media, and network neuroscience highlight rich research arenas for future work. More attention needs to be focused on rigorous yet appropriate research methodologies. There is an opportunity for the use of experimental methods and for indigenous research methods. These developments presage increased collaboration across disciplines with a focus on internet, identity, and inclusion as they intersect with transformational social media and, indeed, impact human lives.